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STATE FOR AF/W, DRL/AE, AF/RSA, AND INR/AA  
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SG](#)  
SUBJECT: MORE CANDIDACIES AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS IN  
SENEGAL'S ELECTIONS

REF: DAKAR 01787

Classified By: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) President Wade made official his intent to run for the presidency in 2007, as did Ousmane Kane, an international lawyer residing in New York, and Landing Savane, head of the AJ/PADS party. The Interior Ministry said that more than 75 percent of the cards have been produced for those who have registered to vote but extended voter registration until August 31. At the same time, the National Autonomous Electoral Commission (CENA) responded to opposition charges that some voter registration cards had been improperly withdrawn by saying the perpetrators had been brought to justice and that there were no further problems with registrations. After months of negotiations between the Interior Ministry and various political parties, a report was issued reviewing the electoral code, a report that, like the rest of the electoral process here, leaves many questions unanswered. END SUMMARY.

#### ANNOUNCING THEIR INTENT TO RUN

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¶2. (U) Candidates are slowly but surely throwing their hat into the electoral ring. Following former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck's lead, President Wade officially announced he would seek a second term. Ousmane Kane, a relative unknown among Senegalese, made public his intention to run as an independent candidate. Kane has no political experience but has offered a platform based on restoring good governance and fighting corruption, along with creating the juridical and fiscal environment needed to attract investment. The most recent person to announce candidacy is Landing Savane, who added that despite running against Wade, his party intends to continue its alliance with the PDS as part of the "alternance."

#### VOTER REGISTRATION EXTENDED

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¶3. (U) Interior Minister Ngom said that more than 3.4 million voter registration cards have been printed. There are currently more than 4.4 million registered voters, and Ngom predicted that the final figure will exceed 5 million. He also noted that more than 65,000 cards are being printed each day, although he added they will soon be printing 80,000 cards per day. On July 26, Ngom also declared that the deadline for registrations had been extended until August 31.

#### CHARGES OF WITHHELD CARDS AND MULTIPLE REGISTRATIONS

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¶4. (C) In an unusual public exchange between the CENA and opposition parties, the opposition accused the CENA of failing to take action against what they claimed were

concerted efforts to withhold some voter registration cards, rather than give them to voters. Opposition party members also expressed concern that there were multiple registrations, casting doubt on the voter registration process. The CENA initially responded that those agents determined to be responsible for withdrawing or withholding cards had been arrested and charged. Later, however, the CENA issued statements saying there was no proof of any cards being withdrawn. (NOTE: The Embassy has only learned of less than 100 attempts at multiple registration, and we understand that fingerprints detected and prevented the multiple registrations. END NOTE.)

¶5. (U) The press has reported arrests of those accused to have registered multiple times. Police recently arrested a person who attempted to register several times in Pikine but whose family claims he is mentally ill. The person in charge of registration for the district of Kahone claimed he spent three weeks in prison after refusing to register one hundred Guinean nationals at the urging of Kahone's Mayor.

#### CAN ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE AS PLANNED?

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¶6. (C) Rumors abound that the President wants to postpone the elections until 2009. Former head of the PDS Youth Fund Ibrahima Niang (who is also Former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck's cousin) said he would be shocked if the elections took place in February. He attempted to engage PolOff in a debate as to whether it would be better to go to elections that, in his mind, would be assuredly flawed because of insufficient time to fix problems starting to appear or to postpone the elections, giving all sides more time to prepare. He claimed opposition members have begun talking to Wade about delaying the elections. PDS member Khalifa Mboup admitted the PDS is

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not yet prepared for elections. He theorized Wade may want to delay the elections for another reason -- to keep the opposition from launching full-scale campaigns in the rural areas, Wade's base of support in the 2000 elections.

¶7. (C) Serigne Mbaye Thiam, a leading member of the Socialist Party, told us the opposition thinks the Government will not be ready for the elections to take place in 2007 and questioned whether the elections would be held on time. He brought up another technical snafu that has occurred with the registration process. Approximately 18,000 voters cards have been rejected because of blurred photos or other problems. The people to whom those cards belong have not been told of the rejections and will not know until September, when their cards will be issued. He also mentioned the logistical issues related to revising the electoral code.

#### BRINGING THE ELECTORAL CODE UP TO DATE

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¶8. (U) Discussions over revising the electoral code began in April 2005. On August 1, 2006, the commission responsible for revising the electoral code and bringing it into compliance with current procedures submitted its final report to the GOS. The report listed areas of disagreement between the PDS and opposition parties. These include apportionment of legislative seats, marking electoral cards once individuals have voted, and the use of a single (versus multiple) ballot(s).

¶9. (U) The PDS reportedly wants to boost the number of Deputies in the National Assembly to 140 (20 more than currently in the Assembly). The opposition, however, demands that 80 of those seats be from the proportional lists, favoring small parties, and the remaining 60 from Departmental lists decided in second round elections (rather than the first-past-the-post system favored by the PDS), which would encourage the development of small party coalitions.

¶10. (U) The other major point of contention is determining

if someone has voted. In past elections, paper electoral cards were marked with a stamp to show that a person has voted. The electoral cards being issued now are plastic, but the question remains as to how know if someone has already cast his or her vote. The opposition is urging the use of an invisible mark on voters, hands that could be detected with ultraviolet light.

¶11. (C) The third major issue in revising the code deals with the use of a single or multiple ballot(s). Currently, each candidate has his own ballot. The opposition wants to have a single ballot now, listing every candidate on the same sheet. Khalifa Mboup argued this could cause confusion and lead candidates to argue over the clarity of their photos on the ballot.

#### OTHER UNRESOLVED ISSUES

¶12. (C) Controversy over the decision to give the vote to military and security forces remains unabated. The GOS has said military and security forces will cast their votes one week before the rest of the populace. According to Serigne Mbaye Thiam, opposition parties do not support this decision and have no confidence that the president of tribunals in each of the Departments where forces will vote will secure their votes for the week prior to the elections.

¶13. (C) Thiam also talked about the issue of media coverage, saying equal access to the media for all parties is a key condition for transparent elections. Wade has still nominated no one to the regulatory body established to replace the widely criticized HCA and bring order to the media. Moreover, current regulations require RTS, the government television channel, to air opposing positions via a debate format every 15 days; but that has yet to take place.

#### COMMENT

¶14. (C) The pre-election period continues to be marked by uncertainty. The one idea that everyone seems to agree on is that Wade's strategy is to keep everyone guessing. Rumors have ranged from the notion that Wade is setting up his son, Karim, to inherit power from Wade to saying Idrissa Seck is negotiating a return to Wade's fold. Whatever Wade's goal could be, the result is an increasingly charged atmosphere. One opposition leader told us if Wade tries to maintain his grip on power by circumventing the electoral process, the opposition will do everything in its power to render the country ungovernable. Rumors notwithstanding, the Government

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appears determined to proceed with the polls on February 25, 2007, and could be ready (reftel). END COMMENT.  
JACOBS